



WORKFORCE OBSERVATIONS

State of Wisconsin
Department of Workforce Development
Office of Economic Advisors

FOR WEST CENTRAL WISCONSIN COUNTIES

BARRON, CHIPPEWA, CLARK, DUNN, EAU CLAIRE, PEPIN, PIERCE, POLK, ST. CROIX

April 2004

Unemployment rates decline as job seekers dwindle

Unemployment rates declined in 57 of Wisconsin's 72 counties during the month of March including five of the nine counties in West Central Wisconsin. Eau Claire County was one of only four state-wide where the unemployment rate was unchanged from February to March.

The unemployment rate for the West Central Wisconsin region, not seasonally adjusted, was 7.4 percent in March, down from 7.6

percent in February and from 8.2 percent in March 2003. For comparison, the unadjusted rate in Wisconsin declined from 6.5 to 6.2 percent while the national rate was unchanged at 6.0 percent. Seasonally adjusted the state unemployment rate in March was 5.1 percent and in the nation was 5.7 percent.

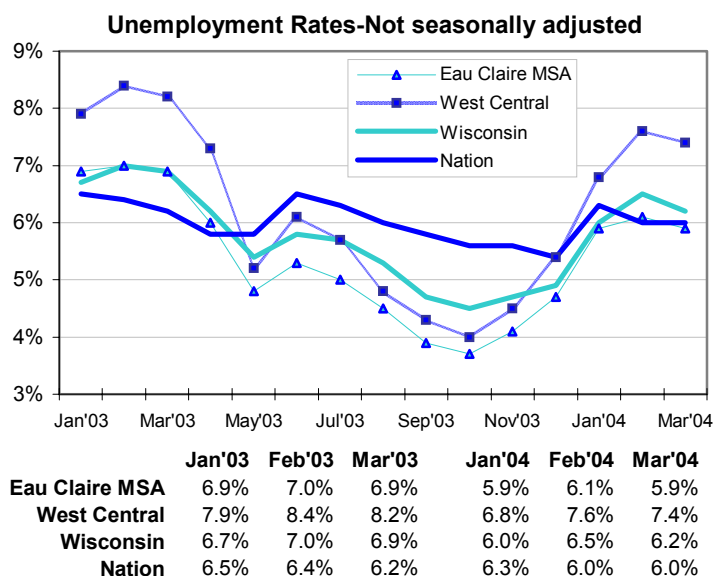
The five West Central counties that posted a decline in unemployment rate from February to March were Barron, Chippewa, Clark,

Polk, and St. Croix.

Even though unemployment rates declined in these counties they were still much higher than either the state or national rate in March. Only three West Central counties had unemployment rates lower than the state, Eau Claire, Dunn and Pierce.

In the counties where the unemployment rate was unchanged or rose during the month the decline in employment was balanced by an increase in unemployment. However, in the counties where unemployment rates declined the number of unemployed, and unemployment rate, dropped but there was no increase in employment. In other words, the number of unemployed declined, not because job seekers found jobs, but because they stopped looking.

In the combined West Central region, the number of employed declined by 200 in March to 226,960 while the number of unemployed dropped by 520 to 18,095. This resulted in a total labor force of 245,050 in March, smaller than in February but the larger than all pre-



Civilian Labor Force Estimates* for West Central Wisconsin counties: February 2004

	Barron			Chippewa			Clark			Dunn			Eau Claire Co.		
	Mar '04	Feb '04	Mar '03	Mar '04	Feb '04	Mar '03	Mar '04	Feb '04	Mar '03	Mar '04	Feb '04	Mar '03	Mar '04	Feb '04	Mar '03
Labor force	25,117	25,299	24,728	33,163	33,337	32,372	16,950	16,935	16,669	24,592	24,596	24,066	56,452	56,569	54,648
Employed	22,921	22,975	22,481	30,578	30,616	29,354	15,389	15,323	14,831	22,991	23,027	22,373	53,770	53,837	51,619
Unemployed	2,196	2,324	2,247	2,585	2,721	3,018	1,561	1,612	1,838	1,601	1,569	1,693	2,682	2,732	3,029
% unemployed	8.7	9.2	9.1	7.8	8.2	9.3	9.2	9.5	11.0	6.5	6.4	7.0	4.8	4.8	5.5
	Pepin			Pierce			Polk			St. Croix			West Central region		
	Mar '04	Feb '04	Mar '03	Mar '04	Feb '04	Mar '03	Mar '04	Feb '04	Mar '03	Mar '04	Feb '04	Mar '03	Mar '04	Feb '04	Mar '03
Labor force	3,313	3,283	3,224	21,962	21,965	21,491	23,834	23,973	24,028	39,671	39,821	39,068	245,054	245,778	240,294
Employed	2,982	2,958	2,926	20,421	20,451	19,947	21,673	21,689	21,579	36,234	36,288	35,393	226,959	227,164	220,503
Unemployed	331	325	298	1,541	1,514	1,544	2,161	2,284	2,449	3,437	3,533	3,675	18,095	18,614	19,791
% unemployed	10.0	9.9	9.2	7.0	6.9	7.2	9.1	9.5	10.2	8.7	8.9	9.4	7.4	7.6	8.2

* not seasonally adjusted

Industry Employment Estimates for West Central Wisconsin: March 2004

(Employment in thousands)	Barron			Clark			Dunn			Pepin		
	Mar '04	Feb '04	Mar '03	Mar '04	Feb '04	Mar '03	Mar '04	Feb '04	Mar '03	Mar '04	Feb '04	Mar '03
Total Nonfarm	20.9	20.8	20.8	10.0	9.8	9.8	16.2	16.1	16.1	2.1	2.0	2.1
Const/Min'g/Nat. Resources	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.1	0.1	0.1
Manufacturing	6.0	6.0	6.2	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.0	2.0	2.0	0.1	0.1	0.1
Trade	3.3	3.3	3.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	2.7	2.7	2.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Transportation & Utilities	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.4	1.7	1.7	1.8	0.1	0.1	0.1
Financial Activities	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.1	0.1	0.1
Education & Health Services	2.2	2.2	2.2	0.9	0.9	1.0	1.5	1.5	1.5	0.3	0.3	0.3
Leisure & Hospitality	1.5	1.5	1.5	0.8	0.7	0.7	1.4	1.4	1.4	0.2	0.1	0.2
Info/Prof. & Bus.Serv./Other	1.6	1.6	1.6	0.8	0.8	0.7	1.2	1.2	1.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Total Government	4.7	4.7	4.5	2.2	2.1	2.2	4.5	4.4	4.7	0.5	0.5	0.5

	Pierce			Polk			St. Croix			Eau Claire MSA		
	Mar '04	Feb '04	Mar '03	Mar '04	Feb '04	Mar '03	Mar '04	Feb '04	Mar '03	Mar '04	Feb '04	Mar '03
Total Nonfarm	10.2	10.1	10.3	14.2	14.2	14.4	26.2	25.9	25.8	77.6	77.3	75.8
Const/Min'g/Nat. Resources	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.6	1.6	1.4	1.4	2.9	2.8	2.4
Manufacturing	1.0	1.0	0.8	3.6	3.6	3.7	5.0	5.1	5.4	11.1	11.1	11.0
Trade	0.8	0.8	1.1	2.1	2.1	2.1	4.3	4.3	4.2	13.1	12.7	12.2
Transportation & Utilities	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.3	1.1	1.1	1.1	2.8	2.8	2.7
Financial Activities	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.5	1.1	1.1	1.0	3.5	3.8	3.5
Education & Health Services	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.9	1.9	1.9	2.8	2.8	2.8	12.7	12.6	12.3
Leisure & Hospitality	1.2	1.1	1.1	1.2	1.2	1.3	3.0	2.9	2.8	7.2	7.1	7.4
Information/Prof. & Bus.Serv.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.4	1.4	1.4	3.6	3.5	3.5	7.7	7.7	7.7
Other Services	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	3.9	3.8	3.7
Total Government	3.8	3.8	3.8	2.7	2.7	2.7	3.6	3.6	3.7	12.7	12.9	12.9

Current month preliminary. Estimates based on March 2003 benchmark. Summing from unrounded numbers.

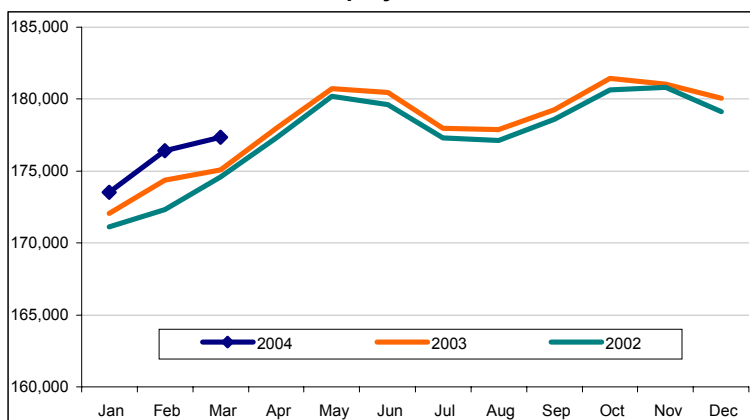
vious March labor forces.

Typically unemployment rates begin to decline after February or March. The reason unemployment rates peak during one of these months is because of the seasonal swing of many local jobs. Seasonal employment swings pri-

marily affect retail trade workers laid off last fall and following the holidays, outdoor construction workers, manufacturing workers in jobs that produce products with seasonal demand, and leisure and hospitality workers.

Some employers have begun to recall these workers, especially those in construction and landscaping, and these changes increased the total number of nonfarm wage and salary jobs in March. Announcements of plant closings in early April are looming on the horizon but will not occur until summer or later.

Total Nonfarm Employment in West Central



In March, all industries except financial activities and transportation showed a small increase in jobs. The greatest increase in the region occurred in trade but nearly all of that was in the Eau Claire area as new retailers prepared to open. Construction employment increased by 320 jobs and leisure and hospitality employers added 340 jobs to the regional picture.

The 11th annual Governor's Workforce Development Conference is scheduled for May 19-21, 2004 in Milwaukee. The theme, **Grow Wisconsin: An Economic Imperative**, centers on Governor Doyle's "Grow Wisconsin" plan. The information, resources and strategies developed through networking and problem-solving during the conference will equip state staff and business leaders with ideas on how to promote and develop Wisconsin's workforce. For more information and to register on-line go to www.gwdc.net.



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